

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



**LINLITHGOW LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

**HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES**

**REPORT BY INTERIM HEAD OF HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES**

**A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the service activities within the Linlithgow ward.

**B. RECOMMENDATION**

The Local Area Committee is asked to note Housing, Customer and Building Service activity as detailed in the ward report for the period Quarter 4 - 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. Providing equality of opportunities. Making best use of our resources. Working in partnership.
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
<b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None
<b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	There is no impact
<b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	There are positive impact on the following SOA indicators: SOA4 – we live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities SOA8 – we make the most effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment
<b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	None
<b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>	Yes
<b>VIII Other consultations</b>	N/A

## D. TERMS OF REPORT

### D.1 Housing Performance Information

The purpose of this report is to provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the activities of Housing, Customer and Building Services, specific to the Linlithgow ward for quarter 4 of 2021/2022.

To ensure that our properties are being re-let and that we were meeting our duty under homeless legislation, the Housing Team has continued throughout the Covid19 pandemic prioritising resources to complete the letting process for both temporary and mainstream properties.

#### Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies

Void Period	Jan 2022	%	Feb 2022	%	Mar 2022	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	30%
4+ weeks	0	0%	1	100%	5	100%	15%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies

Void Period	Jan 2022	%	Feb 2022	%	Mar 2022	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	55%
2-4 weeks	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	30%
4+ weeks	1	50%	0	0%	1	100%	15%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Delays in re-letting can occur for a variety of reasons. The type or location of the property, the completion of void work or the identification of additional works not visible during the initial inspection. Ensuring that vulnerable persons are appropriately supported through the viewing and sign up process can also add to timeframes. Some of our applicants have specific support requirements which require detailed planning and co-ordination by both social work and housing services prior to tenancy commencement. There were 9 policy voids in the ward for this period.

Void period	Number of properties	PV reasons
<4 weeks	2	upgrading
4 – 12 weeks	4	2 – Upgrading, 1 – decant, 1 – Health & Safety
13 – 26 weeks	2	Upgrading
26+ weeks	1	Decant

## D.2 Linlithgow - Financial Summary

For the Linlithgow ward the collection rate for the YTD in Q4 remains excellent at 98.9%. Linlithgow has collected £2,719,086 vs a charge of £2,748,937.

The overall increased arrears in comparison to last year are as a result of Full-Service Universal Credit being introduced in West Lothian from May 2018, along with other Welfare Benefit reforms and the current economic climate.

In the same week last year Linlithgow ward had 105 Universal Credit (UC) households in arrears. Since then the number of UC households in arrears has increased by 1.9%.

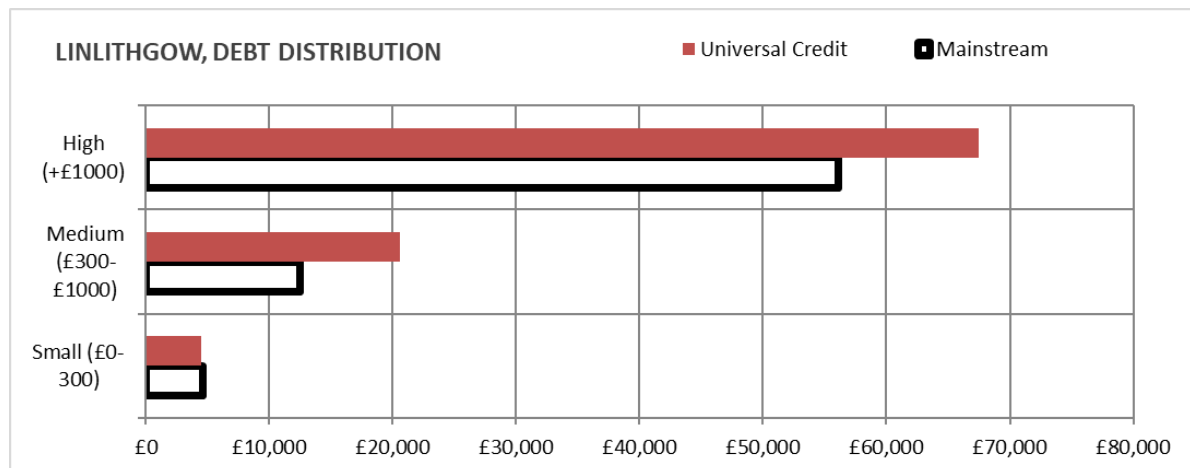
The number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has decreased by 26 since last year. Small debt cases (£300 or less), account for 40.2% of households.

There are 51 serious arrears cases (+£1000 in arrears). These cases are 27.0% of all households in arrears in this area, containing 74.6% of the debt.

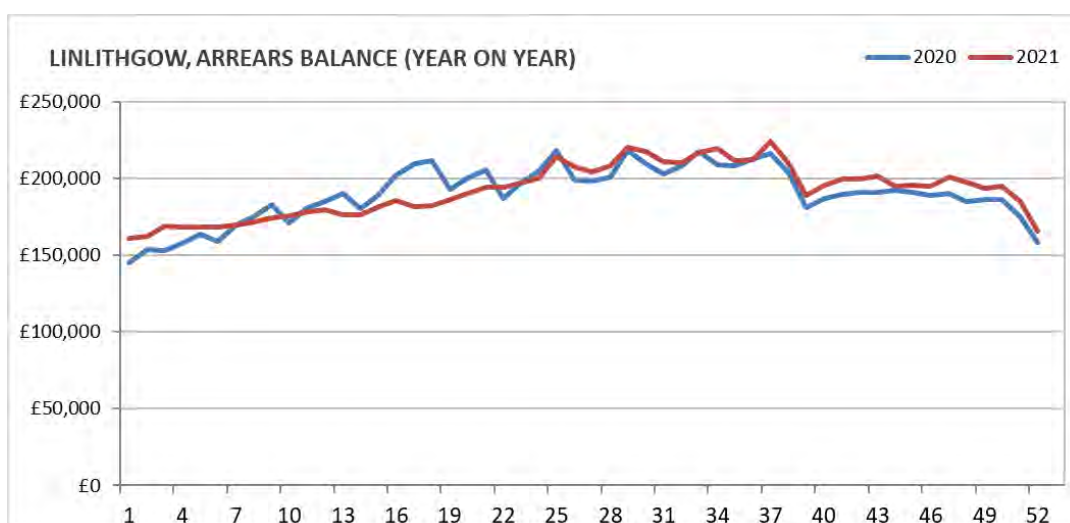
The arrears position for Linlithgow Q4 is £165,776. This is an increase of £7,291 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position is currently £3,496,679.

During the course of this year we plan to focus on the following:

- Making best use of resources by considering communicating more with customers through SMS, email and telephone
- Benchmarking with other local authorities to ensure we identify and consider implementing any best practice
- Performance Monitoring and Reporting will be reviewed and where appropriate streamlined to ensure information is meaningful and robust to assist with improving rent arrears due.
- Promote Alternative payment methods, particularly the Tenant's Self-Service Portal



Arrears Banding	2020/21 (WK52)				2021/22 (WK52)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases
£0.01 to £99.99	£1,616	30	£1,224	23	£880	20	£877	16
£100.00 to £299.99	£6,211	33	£4,278	25	£3,761	20	£3,587	20
£300.00 to £499.99	£3,384	9	£5,056	12	£4,323	11	£8,541	22
£500.00 to £749.99	£6,941	11	£7,750	13	£4,840	8	£4,490	8
£750.00 to £999.99	£3,574	4	£5,993	7	£3,326	4	£7,548	9
£1000.00 to £1999.99	£16,048	11	£15,324	11	£10,807	8	£30,047	20
£2000+	£40,500	12	£40,588	14	£45,290	11	£37,458	12
<b>Group Total</b>	<b>£78,273</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>£80,212</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>£73,227</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>£92,549</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Movement</b>					(-) £5,046	(-) 28	(+) £12,337	(+) 2
<b>Overall Total</b>			<b>£158,485</b>	<b>215</b>			<b>£165,776</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>Overall Movement</b>							(+) £7,291	(-) 26



### D.3 Linlithgow Area Team Activity

Over the period officers in the team have continued with a blended working approach, working from home but also out in the ward areas on a duty basis or as required undertaking essential tasks, such as letting properties, supporting vulnerable customers and dealing with priority issues which have arisen. We continue to work with our Health & Safety advisor and Trade Unions to ensure we have safe operating systems, risk assessments and personal protection equipment so that we are safe guarding our staff and customers whilst undertaking key essential tasks at this time.

The focus on rent arrears activity continues to be a weekly priority task for the team and officers and we continue to work with all our tenants in offering support, advice and assistance. Such assistance includes referrals for money and debt advice, benefit health checks, completion of income and expenditure to help set up a sustainable payment plan and where appropriate, assist with applications for Discretionary Housing Payments. Officers have also completed a number of referrals for the Tenant Grant Fund during this period.

Officers have been working to support a number of tenants in the area alongside colleagues from other service areas and agencies, dealing with a range tenancy management issues and providing assistance and support to help tenants sustain their tenancies. This can range from being involved in complex care management cases alongside colleagues in social policy to being involved in assisting to resolve neighbour disputes with police and Safer Neighbourhood Team colleagues.

During the period officers have been working closely with colleagues in Building Services, engaging with tenants to ensure that health and safety work has been completed to install the linked smoke detectors.

#### D.4 Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing

##### Ward 1 – Linlithgow

RSL New Build Activity	Site	No of Units	Site Start	No of Houses Handed Over	Site Completion
West Lothian Housing Partnership	Blackness Road, Linlithgow	14	Feb 21	0	Estimated July 2022
West Lothian Housing Partnership	Preston Crescent, Linlithgow	15	March 22	0	TBC

##### Local Capital Investment Upgrades

Street	Contract	Site Start	Update
Preston Road and Preston area	Roofing and roughcast	January 2022	Work has commenced on site and will continue into 2022/23

#### D.5 Tenant Participation

Tenant Participation continued throughout Quarter 4 via digital means (Microsoft Teams). We have successfully recruited our new Tenant Participation Officer who will start on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

The customer experience team and tenant participation team have worked together to ensure the best possible service is delivered to our tenants. They have jointly implemented improvements and communications such as a spotlight on housing officers, the talking tenant's scheme - where tenants become tenant experts on our digital platforms, and our Next Generation of Tenant Participation Focus Group is soon to be launched.

With changes in the Performance and Change structure, the tenant participation team will sit within the Customers and Communications Team with Customer Experience, Communication, Complaints and Information. This will allow our tenant and customer-focused team to work together to provide a better service to our customers and tenants.

##### Tenants Panel

Tenant members continued to take part in monthly meetings with senior managers and the Head of Service, discussing service improvements and developments and receiving updates from each service area. The tenants agreed to the meeting schedule for the year. They have been provided with the HRA and Capital Overview and have been involved in performance scrutiny over the quarter.

The tenants have had input in the Scottish Government New Deal for Tenants consultation and the Prevention Consultation.

##### Capital & Repairs Working Group (CaRs)

Managers from Building Services and the Strategy & Development Team met with tenant members to discuss major improvement works, update them on the various projects being carried out and share benchmark information. Building Services provided an overview of Complaints, Processes & Analysis at the January meeting and the Central Void Team (CVT) update in March.

These meetings ensure that tenants' views are heard and offer another scrutinising service delivery method.

### **Tenant Participation Development Working Group (TPDWG)**

Members meet to ensure Tenant Participation stays high on the services agenda, looking at ways of engaging with more tenants. They have also been reviewing the current Tenant Participation Strategy with an emphasis on digital engagement and inclusion. The Tenant Participation Team have carried out a review of the roles and remit of each group and discussed this with members for their understanding and approval.

The members are reviewing the whole 'look and feel' of Tenant Participation, which will be mirrored across all Tenant Participation communication and documentation. The 'look and feel' will be implemented to help modernise Tenant Participation and increase engagement.

### **Editorial Panel**

This quarter the members have been involved in the collation of the Spring Tenants News. The members have also reviewed the tenant's handbook online to ensure it is still relevant and current. The handbook will be transferred into an interactive digital handbook for tenants. In addition, the members have been reviewing letters and policies throughout this quarter.

### **TP Facebook Group**

The Tenant Participation team continue to see a steady rise in the number of tenants engaging with Facebook posts. The members have recently reviewed what content should be shared on the Facebook page and how the 397 members would like to be involved in Tenant Participation. These discussions have resulted in implementing the tenant's talk scheme, where tenants become experts on our social media platforms. We share our surveys in digital form on the facebook page for tenants to complete. We will soon be investigating how we can implement focus groups using the Facebook group.

## **D.6 Safer Neighbourhood Council Officer Ward Information**

The Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) officers continue to work across the nine multi member ward areas as an integral part of the Community Safety Unit. The working remit of the team is to engage with customers and work with partner services and agencies to reduce noise and antisocial behaviour (ASB) within our communities.

Partnership working involves the local housing team, council officers with the SNT and officers from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service all working together to tackle antisocial behaviour. When necessary, the partners will liaise with colleagues from the voluntary organisations including West Lothian Youth Action Project, Mental Health advisory workers and private landlords in order to reduce antisocial behaviour and support members of our community who have been affected.

### **Linlithgow Ward Data**

Table 1: The following tables set out details of the number of new cases opened each month, overall number of active cases; number of cases resolved. Not all incidents become a case and officers will open a case where further investigations are necessary.

<b><i>Cases and Incidents</i></b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>
Incidents reported to SNT	13	32	25	26	39	45	34	24	14	13	11	11
Number of new cases	0	4	6	3	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	0

Number of active cases	4	5	9	9	8	6	5	5	3	4	4	2
Number of resolved cases	0	1	2	2	1	6	1	1	2	1	0	0

Table 2: The following table provides an overview of the types of incidents that are being reported to the SNT.

<b>Incident Types</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>
ASB Part 2 Complaint	5	24	13	15	27	33	23	16	7	9	5	2
ASB Part 5 Noise Complaint	2	8	8	10	5	4	4	6	3	1	3	4
Dog Barking	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ENV Health Complaint	1	0	1	0	2	1	2	4	1	0	2	1
Non ASB Noise Complaint	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1
SST Section 3 Tenancy Management	1	1	2	1	5	5	3	0	1	2	1	3
Youth Disorder	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Unauthorised Encampment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

Table 3: The following table provides numbers of ASBO that are current in ward and compared to all of West Lothian.

ASBO	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of ASBO's current	0	0	0	0
All of West Lothian	12	12	7 plus 1 Interim	7 plus 1 Interim

### West Lothian Ward Data

Table 4: The following table provides number of all active cases and total number of incidents for West Lothian

<b>West Lothian</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>
Total Number of Active Cases	73	72	121	104	83	68	71	55	52	53	57	48
Total Number of Incidents	484	402	456	448	461	441	299	255	209	303	268	332

## Outcomes

A summary of some of the outcomes that officers managed to achieve throughout the period for Q4 – January, February and March 2022 are detailed below:

Warning	A first stage warning was issued to an owner in Bridgend as a corroborated complaint was received of deliberate banging on the wall to the neighbour.
Joint Visit	A joint visit and intervention was carried out with community police to a tenancy in the Vennel, Linlithgow regarding ASB.
ASB Behaviour being monitored	A recent complaint was received about a tenant at an address in Linlithgow Bridge. The behaviour has twice previously ceased prior to submission to court for consideration of an ASBO. The Area Housing Officer (AHO) was made aware that there are no current support services involved with the tenant. Any further complaints will be monitored.
Environmental Health	SNT officers attended a noise complaint and witnessed an ongoing Environmental Health Complaint regarding noise from licensed premises.

## E. Conclusion

The void and let turnover remains low and officers continue to provide advice and assistance to customers on their housing options. The team continue to provide support and assistance to new tenants moving into their tenancies both in mainstream and temporary accommodation.

Income management continues to be one of our main focuses of work to ensure customers are supported and that officers maintain good income collection.

Officers within the overall service have been continuing work engaging with customers through tenant participation and capital programme works.

Joint working has continued with police colleagues and wider community safety partners in dealing with issues of anti-social behaviour.

Officers within the team have supported colleagues in Building Services ensuring that compliance work is completed within our tenancies.

## F. Background References

None

Appendices/Attachments:

None

Contact Person: Phyllis McFadyen, Housing Manager

**Julie Whitelaw, Interim Head of Housing Customer and Building Services**  
**7 June 2022**